

NC Agritourism Networking Association

2009 Annual Conference Evaluation Results

1. Numbers of farms/vineyards/businesses attending from the following counties: Rockingham, Davidson – 3; Avery, Burke, Davie, Gaston, Johnston, Vance – 2; Catawba, Cleveland, Craven, Durham, Franklin, Forsyth, Henderson, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Rutherford, Union, Yancey – 1; Blank – 2.
2. Did you have enough time to network with others and talk about your needs/ideas?
Yes - 17 No - 1 About right - 16
3. Which topic was most helpful? Why?
 - a) Lobbying – 2; session looked like it would be good but it got turned over by introduction. It would have been most helpful; insights into how to influence decision-makers at all levels
 - b) More Success in the Countryside – 8; Success stories – real experiences; interesting and informative to hear other business plans; actual folks involved in agritourism
 - c) Business Planning for Small business – 15; practical information; Debi Joyce – really nailed basic & critical issues just about everyone here should acknowledge – excellent presentation; farms sharing how they operate, pertinent to our vision; needed it the most at this stage of our development; will help us keep focused on what we need to do for a business; Debi Joyce; she addressed many issues tht we needed to hear; Debi Joyce was excellent; great source of references, assistance, & ideals in running a small business
 - d) Storytelling - 15; extremely enjoyable, have very helpful ideas on how to tell a story; suggestions plus inspiring; can add to my farm adventures; it is very important to have a story to tell that can be remembered, even if it is just a story
 - e) Web site - 3
 - f) They all were good; all were very informative; everything
 - g) As a vendor, wish I could have had a twin! Talking to folks was my goal, but would have loved more “class” time.
4. Which topic needed more time? Why?
 - a) Lobbying – 5 Why: everyone needs to get involved; will help any business
 - b) Small business planning – 8 Why: Didn't get to cover all the outline; my weak point; great information
 - c) Web site – 6 Why: Most not tech savvy; interesting, more time; one on one help needed
 - d) Success stories – 4 Why: Need variety of farms; good way to learn
 - e) Storytelling – 2 Why: So much to learn
 - f) Insurance – 1 Why: Some still having trouble finding it
 - g) Marketing – 1
5. What topics would you like to see covered in future meetings?
 - a) Panel discussion with business planner, accountant, insurance agent and lawyer. If they could provide some written materials in the notebook, they could be very specific about information farmers need before meeting with them, how the various people could benefit farmers
 - b) Business expense planning
 - c) Marketing
 - d) How to attract schools to your farm
 - e) More info about selling local produce and products at the farm; love hearing what other people do for pumpkin day, egg hunts, etc.
 - f) Insurance, basic marketing, how to create a blog
 - g) More storytelling – Excellent!
 - h) Best Management Practices
 - i) Speaker on insurance
 - j) Farm products that have created good cash flow
 - k) “Success” stories – makes it personal
 - l) Seasonal businesses
 - m) Small business planning
 - n) New creative ideas to draw people – marketing
 - o) Grant proposals
 - p) Insurance – still a relevant topic
 - q) Always new ways to make contact with our consumers; marketing; success stories
 - r) Community Supported Agriculture
 - s) A session on marketing
 - t) How to find liability insurance

- u) Storytelling
- v) Safety for farm visitors – risk management
- w) Networking with other local farms
- x) Insurance; Logo design

6. What topic would you like more information about?

- a) More farm examples
- b) Putting on special events – one day/weekend; Farmers Market selling; Insurance
- c) Statewide governmental issues and how to deal with them
- d) Networking with like commodities
- e) Put resources online – ncagr.gov or ANA blog
- f) More of what was here today
- g) Available resources for signage
- h) Lobbying public officials
- i) Small business planning
- j) Marketing
- k) More advanced website review, optimizing
- l) Insurance and liabilities, safety networking
- m) How to keep up with state and local laws
- n) Insurance still a relevant topic
- o) Help with how to keep up and maintain our old buildings
- p) Agritourism liabilities
- q) Bring back storytelling again
- r) Seasonal renting, wedding events
- s) Insurance
- t) Insurance – any new companies that will cover agritourism
- u) Business preparation
- v) Insurance

7. Farms willing to share their farm story at district workshops: Stowe Dairy Farms – West Central; Vollmer Farm – North Central; Sugar Plum Farm (maybe) – West District; Beans 'n' Berries CSA – West Central; Mountain Farm – West District; Buffalo Beal's – West Central; Apple Orchard Farm – West Central; James Heritage Farm – West Central; Woosley Farm – North Central

8. How has ANA membership helped you or can help you in the future?

- a) Great ideas about hospitality, planning, insurance
- b) Great program!
- c) Tons of information
- d) The fact that you can share and learn with and from other agritourism farms
- e) Love hearing other folks' stories
- f) Given me advice, opened doors for opportunity, helped me learn
- g) Networking, support, encouragement, exposure
- h) Networking, contacts, knowing others share our passion for sustaining family farms
- i) Connecting with other local farmers
- j) Info from others
- k) Insurance and tours and signs
- l) Networking with others like us
- m) I joined just prior to this conference – so far, it's great
- n) New to the ANA
- o) Great help with marketing – I need to use more often
- p) It's all good information
- q) Networking; loads of practical info including business
- r) We have met other farmers and gotten ideas with other activities to offer
- s) Networking most helpful
- t) The additional networking and information
- u) Very encouraging
- v) I hope it helps with networking on both a personal and county basis
- w) Keep up quality of programs such as you have had today
- x) Advertising
- y) Networking – friends in same "passion"
- z) Having the chance to talk with others who are doing the same thing that you are doing
- aa) Sharing at meeting; networking

bb) Hearing what other farms are doing

9. What changes/improvements would you suggest for the next annual conference?

- a) If we could get more folks from the various Visitors Centers from the counties so they can see what we do and learn about us
- b) Better breakfast
- c) Mid-morning and afternoon cheap snacks
- d) Panel discussion
- e) Opportunity for everyone to attend all breakout sessions – not fair to have to miss even one!
- f) Have more time for sessions
- g) Good program
- h) More on websites
- i) Keep it to two days if economy permits
- j) More time to talk about different businesses, ex. More time for more success in the countryside
- k) Less hauling from one room to another – would be nice to be able to leave bags in one place
- l) Wonder when we can go to another day
- m) Try to keep sessions on subject
- n) Hospitality room on sponsors would be wonderful!
- o) Really loved the interactive music session – it is this kind of energy that makes the meeting enjoyable
- p) Have the icebreaker at the conference location. Not everyone can get to hotel and then turn around and drive 40 minutes within time
- q) No one was in charge for the last success stories; ran over, the other tours didn't know there was a third presenter
- r) No salad for lunch, or buy your own
- s) A food upgrade
- t) Maybe next year farms could be encouraged to bring along their scrapbooks, photobooks, pamphlets, brochures, etc. to display and share. (Even show color prints of web pages.) Put out as a display but don't worry about 'products.'

10. Within 6 months, how will you use the information from this conference?

- a) When I start farm tours, I will use ideas that I heard from other businesses
- b) Get a story together about the farm
- c) Apply for a grant
- d) Marketing
- e) Storytelling – the poems and journals I have and put them in presentation for visitors
- f) Storytelling
- g) Intend to start field trips and speakers helped with ideas
- h) Share with Chamber director to see how we can help folks in our county
- i) Just starting up – so much will be used
- j) Plan to do "storytelling" at farm this Christmas
- k) Develop business plan
- l) Develop better business plan
- m) Working on our business plans
- n) Events and how to use my Century Farm History to my advantage
- o) I will use it all
- p) Help with West District workshop; work on a few stories for our farm
- q) Starting up in agritourism
- r) Work on my website
- s) New business opportunities
- t) Continue to build and grow our operation
- u) Improved "garden party"
- v) I hope to spread the info to those in our area
- w) Hopefully to improve my storytelling ability and write short stories about my family and experiences
- x) Build our niche using ideas others shared with us
- y) Incorporate ideas and successes into our tours!
- z) More farm stories and question time
- aa) Expand storytelling into an activity
- bb) Network with other members

11. What topics would be helpful at district workshops this Spring?

- a) Lobbying; someone to really speak to utilizing the Agritourism Health and Safety Guides for Children; possibly someone to talk about marketing your farm including planning and running special events. Maybe party

planner could do this. They could speak to the specifics and timelines for planning. They could even help farmers "evaluate" their farms to determine appropriate activities.

- b) Marketing and promotion
- c) Storytelling; managing small business tips
- d) Best Management Practices
- e) Different types of operations – tours – production – practical activities
- f) Go deeper into insurance
- g) How to link like agri-businesses in a congruent area in a "trail" for people to visit
- h) More hands-on activities
- i) All
- j) Storytelling
- k) Insurance & liabilities, safety networking
- l) Farm taxes
- m) Landscaping, beautifying our farm
- n) Bookkeeping 101
- o) More farm stories and question time
- p) I like the meetings and hearing from others and sharing
- q) Safety, safety, safety